

American Journal of Public Health reports 37 percent of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans
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STREETVIBES \$1

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CMHA Chief Denies Racism Charges

Files suit against civil-rights lawyer over challenge to voucher policy

BY MARK PAYNE
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

A defamation lawsuit against attorney Bob Newman is the latest blow taken in his battle with Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority Chair Arnold Barnett. The suit, filed in Hamilton County Common Pleas Court, accuses Newman of defaming Barnett in a complaint filed with the United States Department of Housing and Urban



CMHA Chair Arnold Barnett calls himself 'the new sheriff.'
Photo by Lynne Ausman.

Development (HUD).

The fight began when Newman filed a complaint on behalf of three African-American women who have

had difficulties with the Housing Choice Voucher program, which provides housing to low-income residents. The complaint against CMHA and Barnett, accuses the agency of housing discrimination based on race.

CMHA has 400 to 500 Housing Choice Vouchers that aren't being issued even though approximately 10,000 people are on a waiting list for them, according to Newman's complaint. About 90 percent of the people on the waiting list are African Americans, Newman says.

"There is a huge demand for them, and they're not getting them into the hands of people that need them," he says.

Newman's complaint says CMHA has "adopted policies and practices which unreasonably interfere with providing vouchers to eligible persons." At issue is the "work preference" policy, which requires CMHA to go through the waiting list and find employed people before moving on to unemployed people. The CMHA

board voted to remove the policy, but reinstated it at Barnett's request.

"I am the new sheriff in town," Barnett said shortly after his election as board chair, according to the complaint filed by Newman. Shortly after his election, Barnett also proposed the "Enforcement Campaign," which would evict voucher-holding residents for "loud music and foul language."

In retaliation for the Aug. 18 complaint by Newman, Barnett told the *Cincinnati Enquirer* that he had called the executive director of CMHA and told him to buy as much property as possible in Newman's neighborhood, according to a follow-up complaint by Newman. The *Enquirer* quoted Barnett saying, "I told our director to go see if we can buy any property in his neighborhood. ... If (Newman) likes it so much, let's give him a few."

Barnett's comments violate Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, which states, "The threat of the use of Section 8 vouchers or other public-housing

units or resources to inflict a hoped injury on one who has filed a Fair Housing complaint with HUD is a violation of Title VI," Newman's complaint says.

Newman seeks to have Barnett removed because he believes his threats are a violation of the mission of CMHA.

In a statement to CMHA, Elizabeth Brown, president of Affordable Housing Advocates, said Barnett should step down if he doesn't support CMHA's mission.

"Recent public comments by Arnold Barnett, the Chairman of the Board of Commissioners of CMHA, have sparked a sense of outrage among our members," Brown said. "He not only has insulted all the families living in CMHA housing, but has undermined the credibility of the authority in its program decisions and business operations."

Barnett, a republican activist in Green Township, owns an advertising agency. He did not return a reporter's calls seeking comments.

Keep Struggling – but Carefully

Homeless Coalition
remembers and recommits

BY GREGORY FLANNERY
EDITOR

The good news is the Greater Cincinnati Coalition for the Homeless is still active after 25 years. The bad news is the Greater Cincinnati Coalition for the Homeless (GCCH) is still active after 25 years.

Last month GCCH held its annual meeting at Church of the Redeemer in Hyde Park. Josh Spring, executive director of the coalition, spelled out the mixed blessing that its anniversary represents.

"How should this note hit us? Should this excite us or sadden us or a mixture thereof?" he said. "I believe, at its core, this note should deeply sadden us. For 25 years now there has been a grand need for the Greater Cincinnati Coalition for the Homeless. The truth is that when the coalition was founded, the founders did not dream it would still be needed 25 years later."

Tracing the origins of contemporary American homelessness to cuts in social-services spending during the Reagan administration, Spring lamented the fact that GCCH still has work to do.

"Years later after exponentially more cuts and loss of affordable housing, we are still here," he said. "We are still here and we are still fighting old battles – battles such as the ones in 2009, which should never have to be fought. We are fighting for the realization of basic humanity for all."

Given the fact that homelessness persists, Spring detailed the work that GCCH has done in Cincinnati in the past year:

- Resisting efforts by Cincinnati



Staffers from social-service agencies enjoy a potluck at the annual meeting of the Greater Cincinnati Coalition for the Homeless. Photo by Rob Goeller.

City Council to use zoning regulations to restrict social-services agencies from locating in Over-the-Rhine,

- convincing council to restore \$700,000 in funding for social-services agencies,
- working to keep homelessness as a priority in the city's social-services funding,
- organizing tenants at the

Metropole Apartments against a plan to turn their low-income housing into a commercial hotel to serve the downtown entertainment district,

- defeating an effort to impose a tax on panhandlers,
- coordinating efforts to keep a cold-weather shelter open and

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By The
Numbers**37**

the percentage of veterans from U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan with mental-health diagnoses (see page 5).

10,000

the number of people waiting for housing vouchers in Cincinnati (see page 1).

567

the number of affordable-housing units provided by Over-the-Rhine Community Housing (see page 9).

14

the longest number of years Laure Quinlivan has lived in one place (see page 13).

25

the number of years since the Greater Cincinnati Coalition for the Homeless was founded (see page 1).

30

the number of decorative trash cans created by the Vine Street Murals and Can-paign (see page 16).

12

years the age of a child whose teachers wrote her off as "brain dead" (see page 3).

2 lbs. 4 oz.

Dominique Booker's weight at birth (see page 13).

2.5

million the number of Americans affected by bipolar disorder (see page 10).

3

months the age of a child recently killed in Over-the-Rhine (see page 14).

20

the average number of copies of *Streetvibes* sold by Mary Mueller in a day (see page 6).

StreetWise

BY GREGORY FLANNERY
EDITOR

Banned by the Buddhists

Homeless people who sell street papers such as *Streetvibes* aren't always welcome. Earlier this year a Kroger Co. subsidiary banned vendors selling an edition of the *Denver VOICE* containing a reprint from *Streetvibes*. Now a Tibetan Buddhist monastery in Cincinnati has asked *Streetvibes* vendors to stay away. An article in the Sept. 15 edition ("Rejoicing Against Oppression") reported on a conflict between the Dalai Lama and Gaden Samdrupling Buddhist Monastery in Cincinnati. When the monastery presented Tibet Fest last month, the Clifton Cultural Arts Center, which hosted the event, agreed to allow *Streetvibes* vendors to sell the paper and even offered to provide a table and chairs – a welcome kindness to vendors who are used to standing outside in the heat or the cold or the rain, trying to sell the paper to make a few dollars for a meal. But Gaden Samdrupling Buddhist Monastery asked *Streetvibes* not to send vendors to Tibet Fest, saying that their presence would endanger the life of Kuten Lama, abbot of the monastery. No evidence was presented. The monastery even asked *Streetvibes* not to have vendors sell the paper on the sidewalk during Tibet Fest.

If our vendors aren't welcome on private property, they aren't welcome. Homeless people are used to that kind of treatment, but it's disconcerting that a Buddhist monastery would treat them so. The sidewalk in front of the Clifton Cultural Arts Center, however, is public property. But no vendors sold *Streetvibes* there during the festival. One vendor, Riccardo Taylor, said that he would stay away out of respect for the Tibetans. We are glad to report that no harm befell Kuten Lama as a result – although it makes no sense to us.

Death, Be Not Proud

What a bloody inconvenience: The state of Ohio spent two hours trying to poison Romell Broom, and it still didn't work, leading the governor to postpone his execution and resulting in a lot of legal botherment from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Ohio. Broom was scheduled to be poisoned – the official term is "lethal injection" – on Sept. 15. But the killers – the official term is "executioners" – had trouble finding a viable vein. For two excruciating hours they had a man strapped down, waiting to die, jabbing him with a needle. After 120 minutes of this torture, Gov. Ted Strickland finally issued a one-week reprieve, evidently hoping that Broom's health will improve to the point that he can be killed in a more expeditious manner. The ACLU's involvement fortunately brought about a longer delay, with a hearing scheduled Sept. 28 in federal court in Columbus.

In addition to litigation, the Ohio Chapter of the ACLU appealed to human decency, calling for a moratorium on murder by the state of Ohio – the official term is "capital punishment" – following the botched poisoning.

"This follows two other botched executions in Ohio, beginning with Joseph L. Clark in May 2006 and Christopher Newton in May 2007," said a statement issued by ACLU of Ohio. "Both of these executions were eventually completed despite officials struggling to find viable veins on the men."

Whatever the outcome of the case in federal court, remember that people are slowly, painfully being tortured to death in your name. Then do something to stop it.

Kill, Then Get Educated

Another socially acceptable form of killing is soldiering – the official term is "military service." A national magazine that caters to the U.S. armed forces has placed Cincinnati State Technical and Community College on its list of "Military Friendly Schools" for 2010. The magazine, G.I. Jobs, said Cincinnati State is among the top 15 percent of all colleges, universities and trade schools in meeting the needs of military veterans. The publication said the designation recognizes such criteria as full-time counselors for veterans, policies that protect the academic standing of soldiers called to active duty, networking opportunities and other campus events geared specifically toward veterans.

"We have worked hard for years to make our campus and our programs accessible to the men and women who have worn our nation's uniform," said Cincinnati State President John Henderson, who is a military veteran.

"Wearing our nation's uniform" officially means soldiering – not federal jobs that involve uniforms such as park rangers, postal workers or other jobs that don't involve the killing of human beings.

It's Good When Dopey Policies Fail

But human progress advances in spite of ourselves. Consider this small example: Marijuana arrests in the United States have dropped for the first time since 2002, according to the FBI. Across the country in 2008, cops made 847,863 arrests on marijuana charges – 89 percent of which were for simple possession, more arrests for marijuana possession than for all violent crimes combined. An American was arrested on marijuana charges every 37 seconds. But that number was down from 872,000 marijuana arrests in 2007.

"This slight dip in the number of marijuana arrests provides a small amount of relief to the tens of millions of American marijuana consumers who have been under attack by their own government for decades," says Rob Kampia, executive director of the Marijuana Policy Project. "It's time to stop wasting billions of tax dollars criminalizing responsible Americans for using a substance that's safer than alcohol and to put an end to policies that simply hand this massive consumer market to unregulated criminals."

Streetvibes is an activist newspaper, advocating justice and building community. *Streetvibes* reports on economic issues, civil rights, the environment, the peace movement, spirituality and the struggle against homelessness and poverty. Distributed by people who are or once were homeless, in exchange for a \$1 donation, *Streetvibes* is published twice a month by the Greater Cincinnati Coalition for the Homeless.

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The Greater Cincinnati Coalition for the Homeless is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that works to eradicate homelessness in Cincinnati through coordination of services, public education, grassroots advocacy and *Streetvibes*.

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8 MINUTES with Sandpaper

Unconventional tutoring helps kids achieve conventional success

BY MARGO PIERCE
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Writing spelling words on sandpaper or using a nubby surface and chunky sidewalk-chalk are not the usual ways kids learn how to write or spell words. That's a problem, according to Linda Wihl, founder and volunteer coordinator for the Alternative Learning Program.

Children learn in different ways, she says. Some learn better with visual teaching techniques – using colors and pictures – while others learn better through hearing. But the use of music or sounds isn't going to work as effectively for a child who is a kinetic learner – learning through touching or other forms of movement. When a child's style of learning doesn't match that used in a classroom setting, she can be called "brain dead" or too stupid to learn. This happens a lot with low-income children, according to Wihl.

"Every child is intelligent in his or her own way," she says. "If we pair that type of intelligence with their language arts, we can bridge the gap between academic achievement for children raised in low-income households ... if we use their intelligence."

"For example, if a child is kinetic, they're really good at moving, athletic, then they

might jump they're spelling words. I've seen kids go from Ds and Fs to As and Bs overnight because they started jumping their spelling words. If a child is tactile, we use tactile techniques like writing on sandpaper or writing in rice or using sidewalk chalk on a bumpy surface. Pair that tactile ability with language arts, and they can learn."

"Every child is intelligent in his or her own way. If we pair that type of intelligence with their language arts, we can bridge the gap between academic achievement for children raised in low-income households ... if we use their intelligence."

- Linda Wihl

more testing provided the answer.

"He had a psychomotor problem," Wihl says. "Most children can see what people are doing and replicate it, but he could not, so he had to have the muscles stimulated in order to learn how to move his mouth to make a particular sound. Once he was in that sensory experience of learning speech, he learned to speak much more quickly."

Wihl, then the executive director of the Winton Place Youth

Center, started learning about sensory learning. Studying techniques and methods that were helping her son, she saw the opportunity to help those children in her after-school tutoring programs.

"I'm realizing that a lot of what he was experiencing was the same thing that the majority of low-income kids experience because they have a certain type of intelligence that they can take in information but they didn't have the expressive ability," she says. "What I started doing as I began learning these sensory techniques is applying those with the kids at the youth center."

"For example I had a 12-year-old whose teachers kept telling me, 'She's brain dead. We've written her off. She's never going to be able to learn.' But I saw this spark in

her, and I said that's not true. I kept working with her where she was at."

Add the efforts of sensory-learning tutors, and Wihl's suspicions were confirmed: The teachers were wrong.

"She had gone to school every day of her life but she still didn't know the sounds of the alphabet when we started with her," Wihl says. "Once we started the sensory stuff ... within six months she was reading."

This kind of success was repeated over and over again and inspired Wihl to take sensory tutoring into the Cincinnati Public Schools (CPS). Begun in her neighborhood school of Winton Place, the in-school tutoring continues at Winton Hills Academy. Volunteers learn the sensory-learning techniques and pair up with children for one-on-one assistance.

Some members of the Woman's City Club learned about the Alternative Learning Program through a presentation Wihl made and soon became its chief source of tutors. The club also encouraged Wihl to expand the program to include Rothenberg Preparatory Academy.

"Every child we take in is below grade level when we start with them, and for the last two years every child leaving the program has been at or above grade-level in their language arts skills," Wihl says.

In 2008, 30 children benefitted from this unique program, but space makes reaching more children diffi-

cult. New CPS buildings and educational programs are attracting more students to the public schools that were only built to serve current capacity.

"In 2009 it looks like it's going to be 27 (students) ... because we're having trouble finding spaces in the schools," Wihl says. "Winton Hills, even when the new school opened a few years ago, was already overcrowded. So the room that was designed for our tutoring space has a class in it."

But the obstacles don't compare to the positive results.

"I used to work with a teacher trainer who said, 'It may seem like a really tiny difference right now between this child and the child you didn't work with. But when you make that tiny difference right now ... when you intervene with a child in reading at kindergarten level, their life is different.' They don't experience the frustration and develop negative coping skills," Wihl says. "There's all kinds of statistics that show the relationship between the jail population and illiteracy and all kinds of related problems."

Even though she's been able to find the tutors she needs when she needs them, Wihl is always ready to talk to anyone who wants to help her kids. If you're just curious and want to learn more about, be prepared; her enthusiasm is contagious. Contact Linda Wihl via WihlLin@cpsboe.k12.oh.us.



Tank Johnson, volunteer tutor, reading to kindergarten students. Linda Wihl is seated on the floor with the children. Photo courtesy of Alternative Learning Program.



Linda Wihl is helping students succeed by allowing them to learn in a way that suits their personalities.

Photo courtesy of Alternative Learning Program.

Many people work hard to make a difference for the less privileged in the Queen City. "Eight Minutes" is an opportunity to learn who those people are and what motivates them to be a positive influence.

Coffee, Culture and Conversation

Downtown shops offer a variety of experiences

BY PAUL KOPP
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

I have grown to very much appreciate the idea of a local coffee shop over the years. It is a place where people gather to warm their bodies and minds in the morning. A place where sometimes one can sit and be alone to either work or simply calm down and relax after a long day. They seem the only

places indoors where loitering is acceptable: As long as you buy a drink, you can sit as long as you like. They are also perfect for meeting with friends or colleagues in an environment that, unlike a bar or restaurant, caters more to the idea of culture as a vital part of society.

Cincinnati has plenty of coffee shops, each offering its own unique approach, with the variety offering choices for any mood, time of day or state of mind. Here are a few that stand out downtown:

Art and conversation

Lookout Joe's Coffee on Seventh Street is nestled in the corner of the first floor of the Federated Building. Its small size and busy location

aren't very conducive to sitting and relaxing but it has a few little tables, some of which are outside. Facing the entrance is an ice cream freezer. Posters for plays and concerts line the windows facing the street, and work by local artist is on display and for sale. The staff all seem to be involved in the arts and it's easy to strike up a conversation.

They seem the only places indoors where loitering is acceptable: As long as you buy a drink, you can sit as long as you like.

If there isn't a long line or it's later in the day, they'll talk as much as you want. As the 9-5 crowd lines up, at Joe's it seems the staff knows everybody's name. Johanan says the most popular beverage is either a caramel latte or a "carmello," created by the store, which consists of half coffee, half steamed milk, caramel syrup and whipped cream. These drinks seem to match the mood of the place: high energy. Lookout Joe's also sells bagels from Bruegger's and muffins, cookies and other pastries made by Dana's Delights.

Unexpected quiet

Though it's part of the largest chain of coffee shops in the world, Starbuck's

at Fourth and Vine streets seems to have more character than others. The coffee, tea and assorted breakfast foods and pastries might taste the same as any other Starbuck's, but the atmosphere is different. The lighting in the store is dim, and aside from the morning rush, it often seems empty during the day. This gives it a mostly quiet vibe. There are plenty of places to sit, mostly small two-seat tables lining the windows facing Vine Street. The shop also has a few tables outside.

Yet not many people sit and hang out there. It's a part of downtown that is primarily corporate. If you want to get away from a crowd and have some time to yourself, it's a good place to stop. Starbuck's is open till 11 p.m., which makes it stand out among other downtown coffee shops, according to barista Kristina Roach. So who is in Starbucks at 9 p.m.? It's usually people working diligently on their laptops or stopping in for a cup of coffee after dinner or an event on Fountain Square. On the benches just outside the store is often a small group of homeless people; depending on the weather, they might go inside to warm up. The pumpkin spice latte is the store's most popular drink.

"People call all year round to see when we will be getting it in," Roach says.

The large nook

With its combination of kitsch décor and large cafeteria-style layout, the Coffee Emporium on Central Parkway is can be whatever you want it to be: a



Café de Paris is on Garfield Place near Vine Street. Photo by Paul Kopp.

Vive la différence

Café De Paris is on Garfield Place, just a few steps away from Vine Street. Although far from France, the café is as close to Paris as you can get in Cincinnati. Inside the café is a diner-style countertop with stools and several medium-size tables. There

place to stop to have a simple lunch, to study, to have a meeting or just sit on one of the comfortable couches and take in the artsy scenery. When you first walk in, the large size of the place is the first thing you might notice. Depending on where you sit, it could either seem like a cafeteria or a cozy nook in someone's home. The various seating configurations make repeat visits more interesting, because it seems there is always a new place to sit, a new vantage point from which to see things. In general, the environment is

very earthy, laid back in a natural way, as if it would be easy to leisurely hang out there all day, unlike other coffee shops downtown.

Coffee Emporium offers a wide range of coffees and teas from all over the world, which they brew themselves and are on display. Co-Manager Sierra Laumer says one of the most popular drinks is New Orleans-style cold brew Toddy.

"We serve it with a little bit of cream," she says. "It's just a really strong cup of coffee."

The lunch menu is quite large. It includes soups from Myra's in Clifton, muffins from What's for Dinner? in O'Bryonville and a large selection of sandwiches, ranging from hot grilled paninis such as the turkey and swiss to cold sandwiches such as the hummus and gouda. Laumer says Mayor Mark Mallory is often there. If there is a business trying to tap into the new vision of Over-the-Rhine as a neighborhood for young professionals and artsy types, the Coffee Emporium might be it.

On the benches just outside the store is often a small group of homeless people; depending on the weather, they might go inside to warm up.

Café De Paris always seems busy in the afternoon; but in the mornings there are seldom more than one or two people there. The atmosphere exudes a unique sense of calm, almost as if the people passing outside exist in a different world.

The staff usually consists of the owner, Reda Ouahid, and a cook preparing for the lunchtime rush. The café's breakfast and lunch menus offer a wide range of salads and sandwiches, which stand out among other downtown restaurants for their uniquely European sensibilities and fresh ingredients. Salads range from a home-made hummus plate to the Salade de Chavignon, which includes fresh greens, tomatoes and cucumbers. It comes with baguette slices topped with toasted goat cheese. Ouahid says the most popular food item is the Café de Paris, a sandwich with chicken, brie, lettuce, tomato and sprouts. A radio plays mainstream American rock, which is an interesting juxtaposition to the European atmosphere they might be striving for, but somehow it works.



The Coffee Emporium is on Central Parkway between Walnut and Clay streets. Photo by Lynne Ausman.

Off the Battlefield, War Keeps Killing

Veterans of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan show high rates of mental illness

BY ELI BRAUN
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

The White House's decision on whether to raise U.S. troop levels in Afghanistan happens to come during Mental Illness Awareness Week – this year, October 4-10. Congress designated the national

commemoration in 1990 to educate the public on the importance of behavioral health care.

As these two events overlap, one might ask: How do wars impact the soldiers who fight them?

Answer: Not well. An astounding 37 percent of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans

entering U.S. Veterans Affairs hospitals between 2002 and 2008 received mental-health diagnoses, according to a new study of 290,000 veterans in the *American Journal of Public Health*. More than one in five (22 percent) were diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which is four to seven times the rate of PTSD before the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. Almost one in five (17 percent) were diagnosed with depression. Some veterans were diagnosed with both or other conditions.

The study found that those with greater combat exposure were more likely to suffer from PTSD.

Across the United States, communities have struggled to meet the needs of their returning veterans. One particularly well researched investigation by the *Colorado Springs Gazette*, found a sharp rise in violent crime among Iraq War veterans. Their study was entitled, "The Hell of War Comes Home."

In one example from the Colorado unit, Anthony Marquez "used a stun gun to repeatedly shock a small-time drug dealer in Widefield over an ounce of marijuana, then

shot him through the heart."

Since 2006, 10 members of Marquez's 3,500-soldier unit have been arrested for murder, attempted murder, or manslaughter. The article notes that, while young men demographically have the highest murder rate in the United States, the brigade's murder rate was 20 times higher than young men generally.

Marquez later attributed his unstable behavior to the horrors of war. He explained that, if soldiers were hit by an improvised explosive device (IED), they would aim machine guns and grenade launchers in every direction and "just light the whole area up. If anyone was around, that was their fault. We smoked 'em."

Obviously, reducing violence would be the surest way to prevent PTSD.

Beyond that, regular mental health screenings for returning veterans would "help overcome a 'don't ask, don't tell' climate that surrounds stigmatized mental illness," according to another study in the *American Journal of Public Health*. Everyone would undergo an evaluation as a matter of protocol.

The U.S. military has also recommended changes, including "enhanced reintegration support" for soldiers. In Colorado, Fort Carson's 126-page report on the violence among some veterans highlighted the need to protect soldiers who seek out behavioral health from "humiliation or belittlement."

After the violence, the military base doubled the number of behavioral-health counselors. The *Colorado Springs Gazette* reported that the base "tightened regulations to the point where a soldier visiting an Army doctor for any reason, even a sprained ankle, can't leave without a mental-health evaluation."

Advocates hoped that awarding the Purple Heart to soldiers suffering from PTSD might "normalize" the illness, but the Pentagon decided in January 2009 to reserve the Purple Heart for physical injuries.

As we figure out how to care for people coping with the "deadly echoes" of exploding grenades, perhaps we ought to start counting the domestic victims of these injured soldiers among the casualties of war.



Keep Struggling – but Carefully

(Continued from p. 1)

• advocating on behalf of a homeless man harassed by two commercial real-estate developers.

Kenny Havens, case manager at the Drop Inn Center was keynote speaker for the annual meeting. He urged GCCH's member agencies and their staffs to be vigilant against the hazards of the professionalization of compassion: "You can serve the poor but also make sure you get health insurance, make sure you get a really good wage and have really clear boundaries. It seems a lot to ask for but also very selfish."

He harked back to Buddy Gray and other founders of GCCH, when modern American homelessness was a new phenomenon.

"There was a strong, fierce passion. There was a willingness to give all that they have," Havens said. "They were champions of the poor

but not only 'for the poor' but also alongside them as friends."

Spring urged the member agencies that make up the coalition to remember its original mission and to work to make the coalition's existence irrelevant.

"It is not enough for us to struggle, keep what we have and figure out how to work around this homeless-creating and sustaining system," he said. "It is not enough to jump over this homeless-creating and sustaining system. ... We must continue to fight to house the individuals

and families we know and we must figure out what each of us is supposed to be doing to systematically end homelessness. Together as a coalition-movement, we must completely eradicate homelessness, we must pull it up by its roots, and hit with a final death-blow."

Poetry Corner

Thinking of God

By Tyresa Hall

When I think of God, I don't see an idol.
When I think of God, I think of survival.
God is the pure water I need to drink.
God is the fresh air I need to breathe.
There is not a being that governs all things

When I think of God

When I think of God, I feel at ease.
When I think of God, I think of peace.
God is the moon we expect to beam.
God is the stars that guide our dreams.
I see the teacher of everlasting serenity

When I think of God.

When I think of God, I become inspired.
When I think of God, I want to reach higher.
God is the Earth, She's the mother to all life.
God is relief so the soul can take flight.
"In God's name," it's pointless to pick a fight.
For love is all God.

Questions of Endurance

By Tyresa Hall

I sit and force my mind to explore,
To go into realms I've never been before.
I feel a chill when my feet hit the floor.
What can I endure?

Some souls search for the cure
For true love that has been scorn.
Others just choose to ignore.
Some things are hard to endure.

Colors fade as we mourn
Over the melodies that have been born.
But life is a game, and Time's keeping score.
How much more must I endure?

Street Life, My Life

BY RICCARDO TAYLOR
STREETVIBES VENDOR

Some of you may remember my past writings under the title Street Life. If not, then let us become acquainted.

Street Life is my account of the reality of street people. It is my outlet for the expressions of the frustrations, setbacks, and hopelessness that those who live this life endure. The accounts of life are real. The exposure is on me the believability is on you.

So let's take a stroll. Generally, I walk by myself. However, since we are walking the same way, let's walk together.

The importance is you have to know who you are walking with, what your objectives are, and the objectives of the other person. Now that we have an understanding, don't ask questions, nor expose your hand about what you are doing.

We step on the block, attuned to the happenings. The movement, the sounds, the streets, a way of life. Contrary to common belief there is respect for in this way of life; honor amongst the least, if you will. Yet, and still, there are the gray spots; some people you cannot trust, some situations where you have to be on guard, but, all in all it is a norm.

Ok, so we know what we are doing. The dollar bill is our objective, so, we need a hustle. Standing on a corner with a sign and a cup is too slow for me, so, I arm myself with *Streetvibes*. It's an

usually see some action.

Strangers passing by when they stop to interact, it's usually looking to cop. "Drugs, or perhaps a 'girl.'" Either of these spell trouble for the stranger. If they don't know

you, you subject yourself to robbery or assault. Yet, more often than not you come out ok.

Well, we are on our stroll. A stop by

investment. I buy the papers (one quarter per paper), then its work time. I have to stand and represent both the paper and myself.

The money, huh, the money? It's always short, a few dollars, yet it makes you feel good. The idea that I've earned these few dollars provokes the thought that I have a social worth.

Yeah, let's stroll. I've got my few dollars, so, I'm spending. If I have the money, I do the talking. If you have the money, I listen!

Cigarettes and a beer; we walk and talk. The sidewalk isn't easy. Television, radio, nor the press can sort the reality of just what went down. (Suckers and fools are prey. Get in the street, somebody is going to benefit if you don't know what you are doing.)

If you watch across the street where you see a group of young guys gathered you'll

park can be alluring. People laughing, talking, passing a 40 oz. from one to another, everybody trying to drink more than the others. Of course after a few 40's there is going to be arguments, maybe a scuffle, if nothing else enough screaming and hollering to send you on your way. Leaving the park you see individuals sleeping off the drink on benches or near the trees. Yeah, the trees, that's where you have to relieve yourself of all the beer. So be careful where you lay!

For many street people this is all they have to do.

All the frustrations of not having enough money, or a place to go and relax is relieved through hanging in the park, engaging in whatever small pleasures the crowd is engaging in.

I can't spend much time here. You try to hold on to a dollar or two for later in the



Riccardo Taylor. Photo by Aimie Willhoite.

day. Although I made a few dollars selling *Streetvibes*, cigarettes and a beer leaves me a little short. I know I'll need some money to eat and perhaps bus fare to get where I'll need to be to find work, or to get a hustle on. So we walk, taking in the sights and sounds of the street. The days are fast; before you can really accomplish anything that enhances your situation, night is upon you and it's time you find refuge until tomorrow.

So, we part now until the

next time. I'll have to review what I saw today, since every day has its own revelations. There is something that I saw or experienced that will be essential tomorrow when I get up and about. No two days are ever the same, so close attention to what occurs gives me one up on my survival for the day yet to come.

Hey, I'll see you later, but be sure you see me again and we'll see the street in Street Life.

Dancer, Student and 'Streetvibes' Vendor

Mary Mueller likes working with people

BY GREGORY FLANNERY
EDITOR

Mary Mueller enjoys jobs that involve working with the public. She was a go-go dancer in Newport for 15 years. She used to be a model for the Cincinnati Art Academy. She has worked as a waitress, as a housekeeper and taught pre-school children.

"I love children," she says. "They look at you like you're God. When they ask you a question, they're amazed that you know the answer."

Today Mueller sells *Streetvibes*.

"I like talking to people," she says. "I always try to make them laugh. When people say no, I try not to take it to heart. I know a lot of them are living paycheck to paycheck like me. Everybody has a bad hair day."



Mary Mueller can be found selling 'Streetvibes' at Seventh and Vine streets, near Skyline Chili. Photo by Lynne Ausman.

Mueller, 48, would know. She has also worked as a cosmetologist.

"I have a beauty tip for all those women out there: Use eggs to mask your face," she says. "It gets all the debris out of your skin and tightens up your pores."

Mueller likes to sell *Streetvibes* at Seventh and Vine

streets, near Skyline Chili.

"It's great at 12 o'clock because everybody's going to lunch," she says.

Mueller infuses her sales pitch with pleasantness for harried office workers, hawking the paper in rhyme.

"For one buckaroo," she says, "I'll sell a *Streetvibes* to you."

Mueller says she sells about 20 copies a day, supplementing the small amount she receives from Supplemental Security Income because of bipolar disorder.

Mueller, who has a 28-year-old son in western Hills, was once homeless.

"I broke up with a boyfriend and stayed at the Drop Inn Center until I saved up enough to

get myself an apartment," she says.

Now a resident of Over-the-Rhine, Mueller grew up in Delhi Township, attending St. Teresa School, Seton High School, Oak Hills High School and Cincinnati State College. She dismisses popular perceptions of the neighborhood where she now lives.

"They say Over-the-Rhine is a bad place to live but I don't think so," she says. "It's so convenient. There are stores everywhere. Downtown is the place to be."

But moving out of homelessness isn't enough for Mueller. She is a student at Southwestern College, where she is training to become a massage therapist. She has one more year of classes before taking Ohio's licensing exam.

"I'm just a struggling student," Mueller says. "You're never too old to learn. You have to believe in yourself. You're only as smart as you think you are."

She has already mastered the art of selling the benefits of medical massage.

"It increases your circulation and body tone," she says. "It can ease pain and relieve leg cramps."

When Mueller isn't studying or selling *Streetvibes*, she has hobbies.

"I love to sew," she says. "I love to dance. I always have music on when I study. Music seems to make things better."

Suicide Donuts and TV Stereotypes

Stigma about mental illness is killing people

By C.A. MacCONNELL
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Each time I tell my story, here's what happens: I lose friends, jobs and acquaintances. Throw dating out the window, too. After I lose a job, some others won't want to hire me. Not because of my job performance, stability, personality or education, but because of my diagnosis alone - the two words - bipolar disorder. As if, through writing and speaking about brain disorders, I have committed a crime. Which I haven't. My record is clean. And I am clean. I've been sober for almost 12 years. People have doubted that, too.

As I write this, I know that I face the possibility of overwhelming judgment. Soon. Anxiety sets in, then insomnia, then exhaustion. Not symptoms from my illness, but from the effects of stigma. I know the reality - that being open about my diagnosis and my honest experience with societal stigma will soon dramatically affect my life. It has happened in the past. And I know it could happen again.

Damn, I'm tired. Tired from the fight. The fight against stigma. Bipolar disorder is a medical brain disorder, not a character flaw: "We now know that mental health disorders have a biological basis and can be treated like any other health condition. Even so, we still have a long way to go to overcome

the many misconceptions, fears and biases people have about mental health, and the stigma these attitudes create." (www.mayoclinic.com)

Bipolar people have a neurochemical difference in their brains. The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) writes, "Symptoms of bipolar disorder are severe. They are different from the normal ups and downs. ...Like diabetes or heart disease, bipolar disorder is a long-term illness that must be carefully managed throughout a person's life."

I am not psycho, crazy, nuts. I am intelligent, devoted, sincere, and I thankfully have a supportive family. I work hard, pay my bills. I have a master's degree.

But every time I speak, I put myself at risk. Over the years I have traveled throughout Ohio, speaking on behalf of those with brain disorders. I have met with state representatives. I have spoken at universities, the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) and countless other organizations. I appeared on the Channel 9 News. I put my

face with it.

One in five die

Some say that brain disorders are not real diseases, but a crutch. Some say it's solely an environmental, food or stress-related reaction. Sometimes these things can trigger a relapse, as with any chronic illness; but the source is brain chemistry, and it requires medical treatment. Others say it does not exist. The "all in your head" approach. Why would I make it up? So that I could enjoy criticism, lack of employment and loss? Right, I'm making up something so that I can endure years of pain and suffering and later be slammed for being honest? I'm making it up so that I can deal with extensive periods of medication trials and errors, numerous side effects and go in debt because of medical bills? Right, it would make sense that I would make this up. Ridiculous.

"Bipolar disorder affects more than 2.5 million adult Americans every year. ...As many as one in five patients with bipolar disorder completes suicide," according to the NIMH. There are other brain disorders. My grandfather had Alzheimer's disease, for example. Both are chronic, lifelong, life-threatening illnesses of the brain. Yet with

See **Suicide**, p. 10

C.A.
MacConnell
is a Cincinnati
freelance
journalist.

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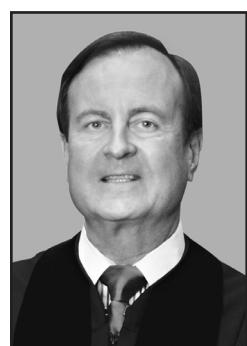
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Community Shares of Greater Cincinnati is a partnership of 27 local nonprofit organizations building social and economic equity and a healthy environment in Greater Cincinnati. YPShares is for young professionals who strive to engage and inspire the next generation of community supporters to become passionately committed to causes that promote social and economic equity and a healthy environment.



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Judge Mark Painter says



Thank You

To the people of Cincinnati and Hamilton County, who elected me as a judge in 1983, 1989, 1994, 2000, and 2006, always with more than 70% of the vote.

I appreciate the trust you have placed in me and have tried to justify it these 27+ years.

As I move to my new position as the only American on the United Nations Appeals Tribunal, I will continue to judge each case strictly on its merits.

But Sue Ann and I are not leaving town. Home will be where it has always been - right here in River City.

Mark Painter

Judge Painter's Highlights:

- Service on Court of Appeals 1995-2009, Municipal Court 1982-1995.
- More than 400 nationally published decisions. Judge Painter is one of the most-published judges ever. Once case named one of six best in the nation for 2005.
- Over 230 seminars teaching lawyers and judges DUI law, appellate practice, and plain-language legal writing.
- Six books, including, *Ohio DUI Law*, *Ohio Appellate Practice*, *The Legal Writer: 40 Rules for the Art of Legal Writing*, *William Howard Taft: President and Chief Justice, and Write Well: 25 Easy Rules to Improve Your Business and Professional Writing*.
- Adjunct Professor of Law at UC for 21 years. Named Chesley Distinguished Visiting Professor of Law for 2008.
- More than 140 published articles, including a monthly column on plain English legal writing in *Lawyers USA* newspaper.

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They're Just Disabilities, Not Definitions

Starfire U students tell their stories

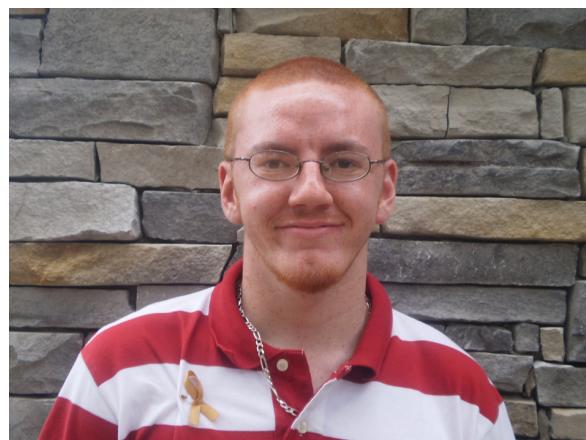
First, a confession: I went to Starfire U not expecting very much. I'd been invited to listen to students' speeches and critique them. I came away amazed at what I'd seen and heard.

Starfire U is a post-secondary educational program for young adults with Down syndrome, autism and other disabilities. It combines the Starfire Council's expertise in advancing socialization with traditional special-education techniques.

I arrived with prejudices about the ability of people with these disabilities to articulate their feelings, thoughts and needs. They quickly shattered my prejudices – so much so that I asked the students to let *Streetvibes* publish their speeches. They do a far better job explaining than I could.

Following is what they had to say.

– Gregory Flannery, editor



Steven Anderson: 'Give Them a Chance'

I am an advocate.

Being an advocate, I teach others to respect people with disabilities.

I am Steven Anderson, and I have autism, which is a disorder that affects the brain. Some people with autism might have a difficult time completing certain tasks. Other people with autism, like me, have difficulty fitting in and making new friends.

Before arriving at Starfire, I was bullied at certain times in my life because of my disability. I used to feel like an outsider but at Starfire U, I have learned to build new friendships and that I can focus on my abilities instead of my challenges. While at Starfire, I met my three best friends: Nikki, Jovan and Matt. Starfire also offers evening and weekend programs for teens and adults who might have trouble making friends.

I'm just like you. I like to read, watch movies, especially my favorite horror movie, which is Resident Evil. I like to spend time with my family. I like to volunteer at my church, and I am an assistant reader at Sunday worship services at First Lutheran Church.

My greatest accomplishment was reaching the decision that I was tired of being left out and feeling like I was being treated differently because of my disability.

In conclusion, you should support people with disabilities because, if you give them a chance, you'll find out they might be just like you.

(Continued on p. 13)



Kathleen Sheil: 'I'm Proud'

Ladies and gentlemen, my name is Kathleen Sheil. I am here to talk to you about my life.

I have two sisters and two brothers. I am a good friend and a good listener. I love my life, and I have a good heart. For high school, I went to Anderson and I had a lot of friends that went there. I also had gone to Turpin High School. When I was in school I was a cheerleader. I am on a swim team. I am on a bowling team as well. I love to talk to a group of people. I am on a soccer team.

I am a part of the Down Syndrome Association of Greater Cincinnati. I also do Leaders in Action, which is an advocacy group at the Hamilton County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities.

I used to work in food service and I am now with Starfire U. I also am learning how to live on my own at a place called LADD.

I have many goals. My biggest goal is to be travel-trained by Metro, so that I can do some of my activities with my friends independently.

I also want to get married some day, but I am not rushing anything!

At Starfire U, I am part of the Ambassador's Club, where we talk about how to be professional and how to represent ourselves.

I am very proud that I have a lot of friends, and very proud of myself because I do a lot of great things.

Oh by the way, I have Down syndrome, and I am proud of it.



Jeremy White: New friends

My name is Jeremy White, and I attend Starfire U.

While at Starfire, I was doing the bike club. It gave me the opportunity to ride in the MS 150 Bike Ride. The ride was 150 miles long, and I finished. After the first ride, my bike got damaged and I had to borrow someone's bike to finish the race. That was a lot of fun, and I am glad I had the chance to be in the ride.

I am also good at pool, bowling and love to play games. I like video games and board games and really enjoy playing checkers.

I live in Cincinnati and like the Reds. I like to eat at Frisch's and order grilled cheese.

I like coming to Starfire and going out, and it has given me the chance to make new friends.

SAY WHAT?

"Human rights are what reason requires and conscience demands. They are us and we are them."

Human rights are rights that any person has as a human being. We are all human beings; we are all deserving of human rights. One cannot be true without the other."

-- Kofi Annan

former Secretary-General of the United Nations

Housing, Stability, Then Sobriety

Jimmy Heath House will provide housing and services to chronically homeless

By DAN ROZIER
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Stay positive: That's the motto of Over-the-Rhine Community Housing (OTRCH), a non-profit corporation that provides affordable housing and commercial spaces in 110 buildings, containing a total of 567 units, granting over 1,200 residents not only a roof over their head, but stability in their lives.

OTRCH is the product of the 2006 union between ReSTOC and Over-the-Rhine Housing Network.

"Our primary mission is to provide affordable housing in OTR – play a good role in the communities and provide affordable housing," says OTRCH Project Manager Sarah Allan. "Even commercial spaces, we try to get businesses that will serve everyone in the community."

- Sarah Allan

are developed, maintained and staffed with social workers to provide residents with stable living.

OTRCH's newest project, named for the late photographer, activist, and Over-the-Rhine resident, Jimmy Heath, will be on Odeon Street. The project takes affordable housing a step further by addressing an often-ignored group: those who are constantly homeless because their addiction to drugs or alcohol thwarts efforts toward stability.

While many affordable-living projects require the resi-

dents be substance-free, the 25-unit Jimmy Heath House makes housing the top priority. Rather than people going from shelter to shelter, the hope is that the stability that comes with a permanent residence will translate into getting sober.

However, the "Housing First" method is somewhat controversial in that it appears counter-intuitive to some because residents are allowed to continue to abuse substances. Founded in 1992 by Dr. Sam Tsemberis as part of the Pathways to Housing program in New

York City, the Housing First model has been employed by similar organizations across the country and emphasizes suitable, affordable housing as a basic human right.

OTRCH plans to have full support psychiatric and counseling services with the help of the Elm Street Clinic and Greater Cincinnati Behavioral Health, Alcoholism Council, and Healthcare for the Homeless so that the translation of sustainable housing to sustainable living is as smooth as possible.

"We have encountered some roadblocks, but we are



Sarah Allan, project manager at Over-the-Rhine Community Housing hopes to begin construction of Jimmy Heath House in October 2009. Photo by Lynne Ausman.

hoping to get construction of the Jimmy Heath House going by the end of October," Allan says. "It will be support hous-

ing for chronically homeless. This model has been used and proven around the country."

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Kalima Rose is Senior Director for PolicyLink and leads their affordable housing and regional equity team. She manages local and statewide housing initiatives for PolicyLink and has expertise in helping communities pass policies that finance affordable housing; change land use policy to better support mixed-income housing development; and advance fair housing practices. PolicyLink is a national research and action institute advancing economic and social equity by Lifting Up What Works.®

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Suicide Donuts and TV Stereotypes

(Continued from p. 7)

mental disorders, often the public reaction is completely different. I daily see Websites, Facebook quizzes and groups, TV shows, MySpace blogs –and on and on – either representing a brain disorder as scary or treating it lightly. This

What if it was called “Chemo Donuts?” That would cause an outrage. “MS Donuts?” And what if the names of the donuts poked fun at these illnesses? People would be running in there with protest signs.

morning I talked with a woman whose son was diagnosed bipolar after his death. After? He was afraid to reach out, due to stigma. Then it was too late. I hear these stories constantly.

Some of my friends have died because of this. Gone, dead.

Due to stigma, sick people are afraid to seek help. Or they think treatment doesn't work. So the next time you see a man or woman sleeping on the street, take a closer look. He/she could be suffering from an untreated medical illness. Exactly like me. I'm just lucky enough to have support and medical help. Is that fair?

Misdiagnosis happens

When patients enter a psychiatrist's office and are dishonest about their sobriety, their behavior might mimic that of a bipolar individual. So they might get misdiagnosed. But in my case, my symptoms appeared full-force at one year of sobriety and got much worse by two years of sobriety, not better. It struck with classic timing – early twenties – a common case for bipolar individuals. My symptoms were real signs of brain dysfunction and had nothing to do with laziness or withdrawal.

Are others misdiagnosed? Yes. In a July 29, 2009 issue of Science Daily, results of a recent study at Rhode Island Hospital and Brown University showed that “patients who had been over-diag-

strategy based on solid science, not on the current method of trial and error,” he writes. “We should also work to find an exact genetic origin and to relate those genetic origins to what is happening in the brain.”

Doctors get a bad rep. But these misdiagnoses, these facts, are thrown into the limelight to promote stigma. Instead of glorifying mistakes and discouraging treatment, we desperately need support for research, funding for advocacy and education. Many doctors are right. Dead on. Problem is, by the time people get there, due to roadblocks of societal negativity, they're often unwilling or so sick that it makes treatment utterly difficult.

The correct diagnosis can take time. Individuals with bipolar disorder face up to 10 years of coping with symptoms before getting an accurate diagnosis, according to the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance. First, I was diagnosed with clinical depression. Then schizoaffective disorder. Then a general psychotic disorder. It took two years before they correctly diagnosed me as bipolar, and by then I was in a suicidal, comatose depression. With better understanding and more support from society in general, I might've avoided having such a traumatic episode. I am unbelievably lucky to be alive.

Jokes can kill

I am not psycho, crazy, nuts. I am intelligent, devoted, sincere, and I thankfully have a supportive family. I work hard, pay my bills. I have a master's degree. My last episode was in 2005, when one of my medications stopped working, and we had to adjust the treatment plan. That took a while. Treatment for any chronic illness often takes a while. It takes time and unbelievable strength.

When people are diagnosed with other chronic illnesses, the mass public shows genuine support. They have benefit shows, fundraisers. There is an enormous level of empathy. People with mental disorders get this response instead: In Campbell, Calif., is a new company called, “Psycho Donuts.” Its Web site says, “Psycho Donuts has taken donuts to the next demented level. ... Psycho Donuts has taken the neighborhood donut and put it on medication, and given it shock treatment. ... Even if you're not certifiably insane yourself, you'll still find a handful of donuts from the past.” A few of their donut choices are called, “Bipolar,” “Manic Malt” and “Psycho.”

What if it was called “Chemo Donuts?” That would cause an outrage. “MS Donuts?” And what if the names of the donuts poked fun at these illnesses? People would be running in there with protest signs.

Extremely abundant promotional tools such as this serve as great fodder for stigma; they need to be addressed with extreme seriousness. Stigma is deadly. Yet as of today, according to an America Online poll on Psycho Donuts, 60 percent of people think the “theme is appropriate.” Really? Tell that to the mother I know whose schizophrenic son committed suicide. Tell that to all of the countless people I know whose loved ones died due to the affects of stigma

and lack of treatment. My illness is a scary joke? It's OK for people to commit suicide as long as we have our donuts?

It's OK for some kid to end up in the psych ward again, as long as we have our Facebook fun? It's OK for me to get abused at work, as long as the abuser's clients keep rolling in? It's OK for us to get scared at Halloween haunted houses when someone jumps out at us wearing a straight jacket, because it's funny-scary, right? I've seen someone in a padded room. It is not funny at all. Go visit the top floors in hospitals, the psych wards. Yes, the top, top floors. We are still hidden there. And those are not funny either.

My depression was so low in 1999 that medications couldn't touch it. Shock treatments are actually called electro-convulsive therapy (ECT), because that's what it is – therapeutic. Yet countless movies depict it as horrifying. I was under anesthetic. I felt no pain. The doctor was professional and kind. I had post-traumatic stress because of stigma, not because of the treatments.

ECTs are commonly used today to treat severe depression and psychosis.

I could sit back and quietly hide it, but then I think about the countless people with no support and no shot at getting well. So if I can be a voice for others with brain disorders, I will.

Many more lives could be saved if it weren't for these harrowing representations. And yet we have to poke fun at brain disorders, don't we? We have to have Halloween fun, TV scares, Internet groups and movies directed at making brain disorders into a freak show? All the while, people are dying.

Is this 2009? 'Cause it sure feels like we're stuck in the dark ages on this one. And I'm begging people to come out and see the light.

I watch crime shows. As a writer, I'm very interested in the storytelling methods, the dialogue and the subtle clues. But here's an idea: How about, every now and then, writers make one of the detectives have an illness, rather than the murderer? How about the detective gets sick, finds treatment and gets better? Show that treatment works for once. What if, on one show, a sick criminal found treatment and recovered? What if the person started helping police, helping other criminals, becoming successful, all while still managing an illness with successful treatment?

Sure, some people with brain disorders are criminals. Some people without brain disorders are criminals. Some of my friends with brain disorders are highly successful professors, doctors, artists and more. Others are unemployed and struggling. Some are geniuses. They are all over the map, just like everyone else. So let's show it like it is. How about on TV we see doctors, lawyers, comedians and police officers with brain disorders, because in the real world, this is the case. Not only would this be freeing for those with brain disorders, but it would also be fresh creatively. I want to see writers embrace both sides – the ones who get

For more information about the stigma associated with brain disorders, bipolar disorder, visit www.mayoclinic.com.



Photo from “Psycho Donuts” web site.

nosed with bipolar disorder were more frequently diagnosed with major depressive disorder, antisocial personality disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder and eating and impulse disorders.” This can happen due to many factors that depend on a patient's symptoms, honesty, history with substance abuse, environment and more. Doctors are only at the baby stages of research.

In bipolar individuals, the brain is wired differently, according to Jon-Kar Zubieta, M.D., assistant professor of psychiatry and radiology at the U-M Health System.

“Now we must expand and apply this knowledge to give them a treatment

For more information about the National Alliance on Mental Illness, visit www.nami.org.

See **Suicide**, p. 11

Suicide Donuts and TV Stereotypes

(Continued from p. 10)

sick, and the ones who get better. Because in life, many people do get better. Let me write for one of your shows, kill the stereotypes and make it real.

I have seen the sickest of the sick re-

"Due to stigma, the typical reaction encountered by someone with a mental illness (and his or her family members) is fear and rejection."

— Mental Health Works

is fear and rejection. Some have been denied adequate housing, loans, health insurance and jobs due to their history of mental illness. The stigma attached to mental illness is so pervasive that people who suspect that they might be mentally ill are unwilling to seek help for fear of what others may think."

‘Imagining it’

Work. People with brain disorders get situations such as this. Once I lost my job due to a relapse. Fatigued, stressed and anxious, I knew that my medications needed adjustment. Daily growing more ill, I was terrified to tell anyone, because I had known severe consequences with revealing my illness to past employers. I did tell my boss that I needed a break. No break. Afraid to reveal my diagnosis, I got worse. I needed medical help, but instead I had to “tough it out,” keep my mouth shut, and then it was too late. I became incredibly sick and ended up in the emergency room soon after.

Telling the boss is seen as so risky that “the vast majority” of workers with mental illness still hide their condition, according to Professor Marjorie Baldwin, an economist with the School of Health Management and Policy at the W.P. Carey School of Business and co-author of the study, “Perceived vs. Measured Stigma Against Workers with Mental Illness.”

What if I could’ve said, “I need to see my doctor, change my meds and then I will be back full force.” I might’ve kept the job and avoided the relapse. I might’ve avoided a suicide attempt and a horrifying stay in a highly abusive psych ward that caused me to have flashbacks for years. I might’ve avoided a severely long recovery period during which I had to relearn how to read and write.

Next job. I worked there for five years, and I worked hard. I loved the place, and many of the clients were like family to me. My illness never affected my work. During that time I only missed one or two days for the flu. No one knew about my medical history until I released a local cover story revealing my bipolar diagnosis, and the raw truths I’d faced. And then...

Soon after, a man started harassing me at the workplace. He then e-mailed me creepy, sexual messages. All day long. He repeatedly showed up outside of my apartment building. It was clear to all those at work that this man was not well, and I knew I was in danger. I asked my boss to ban the stalker from the workplace, and my boss responded, “Are you sure you’re not imagining it?” My boss mentioned my bipolar article. After many years he suddenly doubted my level of competence, although I’d always been utterly professional and com-

pletely competent. It wasn’t until I took the stalker’s e-mails to the police that my boss finally believed me and banned the man from the workplace.

Later, a coworker had the same problem with a different man. She told the same boss, who didn’t question her at all. The boss got right on it and talked to the man, who didn’t return. While with me, there was a long period of doubt and embarrassment, with her, there was immediate support and action taken.

Then one coworker began to abuse me regularly. Criticizing and degrading me, she constantly cut me down, bringing up highly personal issues and my illness in front of clients. Thinking back to the stalker situation, knowing I would be doubted, I kept my mouth shut and did my job. I never retaliated. I never talked negatively about the person. But finally, after a year of consistent abuse, I confronted the coworker directly. I simply asked the person to stop criticizing me in front of clients and to stop bringing up my personal issues at work.

The response: “You just don’t understand my criticism because you’re too spaced out on medication.”

Actually, I’m very sharp, smart and quick-witted. I told her this. In fact, I remember unbelievable detail. School was always easy. When I talk, sometimes I pause, but that’s because I think before I speak. That’s because I am sensitive, and I care about people, not because of medication.

I finally told the owners, but the abuse got worse. Then, one owner was considering giving me an opportunity. I was excited. It had taken me years to work for it. But the abusive coworker talked to the owner on the phone, brought up my illness, and slammed my character in front of clients and coworkers. Again, my illness had never affected my job. The only reason people knew about it was because of the article I’d written. In reality, this person was furious that I might progress at work.

Other coworkers saw it all happen. Although disagreeing with the way they treated me, no one spoke up or defended me.

I had a meeting with one owner. I said, “Out of the five years I’ve worked here, and the nine years I have known you all, my illness has never affected my work life in any way, shape or form.”

The owner completely agreed with me but did not fire the person. No consequences at all. The owners did nothing. On the Mental Health Works Website, there is a note to employers: “If you hear other employees discussing the details of the individual’s illness, you need to talk to the other employees and let them know it is inappropriate. If these conversations reveal discriminatory attitudes or could be seen to constitute harassment, appropriate disciplinary measures should be taken.”

I had no choice. I left. Really, it was a forced exit. Who could take that constant abuse? They said they would call me if there was a change, if the abusive coworker left. That person finally left, but they never called me.

So whether I reveal it or not, either way, I’m pretty well screwed. Gratefully, I had a lot of outside support after leaving. I have been well, happy and thriving for a long time. I work my hardest at living life and staying well. I work damn hard. Do some people run around ill without

seeking help? Sure. Many times they can’t afford it. Or stigma scares them off. And some flat-out don’t want to get well. But it makes it crushingly difficult to get and stay well, considering the walls we face.

Quiet no more

People with lifelong, chronic illnesses relapse. It’s part of the disease, and there is no cure. But when we relapse, we get scorned, abused, condemned and attacked. There should be encouragement and understanding for people with brain disorders when they relapse, not criticism, name-calling and general denigration encouraged by stigma.

If I take my medications, go to therapy and honestly tell the doctor how I’m feeling, keeping tabs on my medications, I have a good shot at staying well. Many people can get and stay well. But without critical support, it is nearly impossible. What if someone with diabetes was heading to the hospital for a check-up, and on the way, a crowd of people scorned and criticized her for being crazy? These are the hard truths we face.

Treatment works. NAMI writes, “While there is no cure for bipolar disorder, it is a treatable and manageable illness. After an accurate diagnosis, most people can achieve an optimal level of wellness. Medication is an essential element of successful treatment for people with bipolar disorder.” I am incredibly high functioning, and for the most part, the only reason people know about my illness is because of my advocacy work. Sure, I could sit back and quietly hide it, but then I think about the countless people with no support and no shot at getting well. So if I can be a voice for others with brain disorders, I will. And if I have to lose jobs, friends, boyfriends, and experience insomnia because of it, so be it. It’s too important. I can’t sit back and be quiet anymore.

I might have a brain disorder, but that’s not all there is to me. I am a writer, a teacher, a friend, a daughter, a daughter, a sister. I am spiritual, intensely creative, thoughtful and unique. I like horses, crisp fall air, seeing live bands, cool

sneakers, slick words, photographs and paintings that make your heart sing. I laugh and cry and hope. Damn, I dream. When thunderstorms come, I sit outside, just to feel and hear the rain for all its worth. I am a complex woman who wears baggy jeans; and through all of the fear, I know that this fight has given me more strength than I ever could’ve imagined. Every day I am well, I am utterly grateful.

So to those people in California, good luck with your donut venture, but know this: Because of the stigma that you are promoting, people are dying every day. Stigma is bullshit. We all deserve the chance to get better. And stay better. And live and work and be treated as multi-faceted human beings. We deserve support – financially, physically, medically, mentally, spiritually. We deserve respect. And care. We deserve love. We deserve to be loved. We deserve to be treated with dignity.

For more information about the harm caused by the stigma of mental illness, visit <http://www.mental-health-works.ca>

For more information about the symptoms of bipolar disorder, <http://www.nimh.nih.gov>.

We have to have Halloween fun, TV scares, Internet groups and movies directed at making brain disorders into a freak show? All the while, people are dying.

Streetvibes is a newspaper that provides relevant discussions of homelessness, poverty and other related social justice issues

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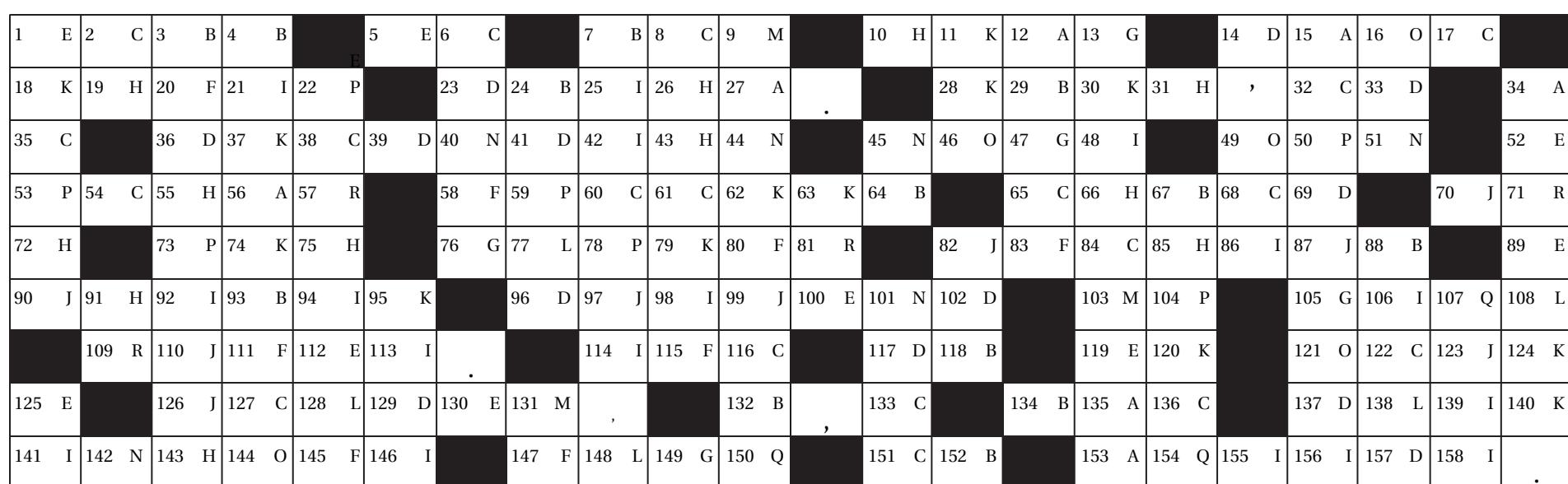
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Acrostic Puzzle



An acrostic puzzle consists of two parts: (1) a hidden quote, laid out in crossword puzzle format, with each letter assigned a number and (2) a series of clues, with each letter in every clue's answer corresponding to a specific letter in the hidden quote. As each clue is answered, more and more letters are completed in the hidden quote, until eventually all clues are answered and the entire quote is revealed. Additionally, in this puzzle, the first letter of each correct answer to clues a) through k) spell out the speaker of this quotation's First and Last Name.

A) Former host of the Tonight Show. [two words]

153 15 27 56 12 34 135

B) ABC TV comedy from 1977 to 1981. [three words] Hint: begin with the number of Cincinnati City Council Members minus one

152 3 64 7 67 132 4

118 134 24 93 88 29

C) Ernest Hemingway novel and famous line from John Donne. [five words]

38 8 32 65 2 35 133

136 127 17 151 68 61 122

116 54 60 84 6

D) Other name of 1964 Mississippi Summer Project. [two words]

39 69 102 157 36 96 23 137 129

14 117 33 41

E) Someone generous to wait staff. [two words]

119 5 130 1 100 52 89 112 125

F) Treatise by Euclid, or the period table of the

_____.

20 80 83 111 115 145 147 58

G) Reimburse

105 149 76 47 13

H) Sentence of capital punishment, ardently advocated by Simon Leis. [two words]

72 75 91 10 19

55 26 43 66 85 143 31

I) Not science, but what some Creation Museum fans want taught instead of Evolution. [two words]

21 25 98 141 156 114 155 146 106 48 94

158 42 113 86 139 92

J) Disgust and sickens, or what pornography does to Simon Leis

87 70 97 82 90 110 126 123 99

K) Dental feature of David Letterman. [four words]

140 124 79 62 63

L) Adobe, or popular TV medical drama on Fox

148 128 138 108 77

M) Basic question for reporters, or English rock band The _____.

9 131 103

N) Hate, dislike intensely.

101 40 44 51 142 45

O) Not thin, or what some might call the speaker of this puzzle's quote.

49 46 144 121 16

P) "It tolls _____" (End of line from John Donne in Clue C above). [two words]

104 78 22 73 50 53 59

Q) Not night, or actress, singer Doris _____.

107 154 150

R) Basic physical unit of heredity, or dancer, actor _____ Kelly.

109 57 71 81

Storyteller Runs for City Council

Former TV reporter Laure Quinlivan hits campaign trail, now as a candidate

BY ARIANA SHAHANDEH
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Laure Quinlivan, a former reporter at WCPO (Channel 9) is a Democratic candidate for Cincinnati City Council. She spoke with *Streetvibes* about panhandling, political ambitions and misinformation.

How do you feel about (Jeff Birding's) proposal about cracking down on panhandling?

I think that's ridiculous. I would not support trying to get panhandlers a license. ... The problem with panhandling is it turns off a lot of people who come downtown. It scares a lot of people, especially people who don't come downtown very often. Since I've done so much work in Over-the-Rhine, where I've been walking up and down Vine Street and Main Street and forever and on a lot of streets where my friends wouldn't walk, it doesn't scare me. But I do understand their fear.

How do you feel about criticism of Mayor Mark Mallory for visiting other cities to view their streetcar systems?

I think people who criticize Mallory for taking trips to other cities to see best practices are very petty. He is our mayor, and he should be going to other cities to look at best practices. He should be taking trips to our sister cities and building the alliances and bridges that will eventually bring us business. Would they criticize the CEO of a company for travel when he goes to other branches and



Former TV reporter Laure Quinlivan is running for Cincinnati City Council. Photo from Quinlivan campaign.

also goes to his competitors? No. It's what you do when you are the leader of an organization. I think it's good.

Crosstalk about the prestige of a political position...

I think a lot of people in politics are attracted for that reason – not everyone, but a lot of people have dreams of becoming this and that. Me? I'm running because I just want to see some things get done in the city where I live and where I'm raising my kids, where I've chosen to stay. When I left Channel 9 at the end of '07, I had a job of-

fers all over the place in other states. I just didn't want to go. I've made this my home. This is the longest I've ever lived anywhere: 14 years. That's why I didn't try to get another job somewhere else. I have no political ambition beyond city council, so it doesn't matter to me.

What are a couple of specific projects you'd like ideally to put into action as soon as you can?

The streetcar is a big push; I want to do everything I can to help sell that to the public.

I interviewed the mayor of

Portland. I interviewed the people who ride the streetcars there: "Why do you ride the streetcars? What are your thoughts?" So I'm putting together an in-depth report just like I would if I was on the I Team and I was assigned to do it, so that I can put it on my Web site and help educate people about the streetcar issue.

The other thing that I hope that I can do something about is the blight issue with vacant buildings. That is just a constant refrain with neighbors and people – these va-

cant buildings that, you know are kind of the eyesore of the neighborhood, and they attract drug dealers and prostitutes and all that. It's so hard to get those out of the hands of bad building owners. So here's my idea: to have a vacant building coordinator (whose) job (is) to systematically turn over bad buildings to new owners. That's a best practice I learned from Columbus. (In) our city, it's no one person's job, it's no one person's department. It helps to have one person, someone who is the vacant buildings person. They get in touch with that owner. Sometimes it's really hard to get in touch with the owner. I feel like that's a worthwhile position to fund since it's such a problem. I think everyone would be thrilled if they knew who to call to help them with the vacant buildings.

What is something that you think the Cincinnati citizenry wakes up believing every day that isn't true?

Downtown is unsafe. Over-the-Rhine is just for poor people. We don't have anything going on here. I think those are some common misperceptions. That's part of the reason I think I can be effective on city council, because I am a reporter; I am a storyteller. I do have this comparison having lived elsewhere. And I do appreciate what we have, and part of it is just getting that message out in a better way. We haven't been very successful in promoting our city. Obviously we are not doing a good job in telling our story.

Editor's Note: This is part of a series of interviews with candidates for Cincinnati City Council. The opinions expressed here are not to be perceived as an endorsement or reflecting the views of the Greater Cincinnati Coalition for the Homeless, which publishes Streetvibes.

They're Just Disabilities, Not Definitions

(Continued from p. 8)

Joe Brumm: 'Listen to Me'

One thing you will find out about me is that I'm a talker. I like to ask people questions. I want to know about people that I meet.

I have a brother named Johnny. He goes to Notre Dame. I have two loving parents, and I'm a pool shark. I'm also good at bowling. I often bowl strikes.

I went to Purcell Marian High School, where I loved learning from my teachers. On my free time I eat at my favorite restaurants: Gold Star, Zip's and Arthur's. I also go online and check out Facebook.

My favorite music is country. Brooks and Dunn are the best. "Only In America" is my favorite song.

I just started Starfire U. I have made some new friends. I like Starfire because I get to talk to people. I want people to listen to me, because I have great things to say. I want to be the best Joe Brumm that I can be.

Dominique Booker: 'Stand for Something'

When I was born, you could fit me in the palm of your hands.

My name is Dominique Booker and I am here to talk about some of the disabilities that I have and how I learned to deal with them on a daily basis.

All of my disabilities started when I was born. I was born blind in my left eye which means that I can't see anything in that one eye. The reason why I can't see in that eye is because my retina didn't attach to my pupil. I was born premature, which means that I was born very early and a lot of my major organs were underdeveloped.

I weighed 2 lbs. and 4 oz. The doctors told my mother that I wasn't going to make it because I was born so early. Another one of my disabilities is that I have asthma, which means that it's hard to breathe sometimes if I do certain activities or if there's a change in the weather. Since I was born so early, I had to stay in the hospital for nine months because of the complications that I had. During those nine months I had to learn how to walk and learn because the nurses taught me how to walk and talk. When I finally got out of the hospital, I was 1 year old.

Now, I'm 22 years old, I'm an Oak Hills High School graduate, and I live a normal, happy life, only I just have challenges that I face every day. My goal is to live on my own and have a career in medical Assisting. One of my quotes is: "Stand for something, or you will fall for anything."

To the Editor

There are a couple reasons that I'm writing you today. Both of them are from the Sept. 1-14 2009 edition of *Streetvibes*.

First, the better reason is the article by Riccardo Taylor, a guy who seems like, if it wasn't for some unknown calamity in his life, he'd be a drug counselor or professor somewhere instead of a *Streetvibes* vendor. His article on homelessness effecting specific groups of people like the elderly, the very young and uneducated puts a more human face on this issue.

Most homeless people I see, but don't know personally, are raging drug addicts. They come to my neighborhood in Northside to buy and sell drugs. I know this because I've been around drugs most of my adult life.

Anyone that is staring blankly glued to a bench, wildly screaming to themselves or barely being able to cross a street or drive a car through an intersection are not exactly the "Just Say No" crowd. They are on either crack or coke or looking to get some. It's the truth.

The rest I see sleeping downtown outside the Netherlands hotel and it's like looking at grim death in the face.

I was homeless when I was a young man, a few times, and so was my ex-girlfriend. She moved all the way to New Orleans before coming back home but neither one of us had to sleep in the streets. We relied on new friends and the cramped comfort of our cars. We both have gotten college educations since then (I worked my way through for six years) and a series of jobs to make sure we never have to really rely on strangers or meth heads named "Kaos" or "Jabba" for a place to sleep at night.

So, living through the experience wasn't for nothing. Neither one of us were drug addicts. We were strong-headed people that didn't see things our parents' way starting at a very early age.

Secondly, the article entitled "Stop Snitching, for Justice's Sake" by Suhith Wickrema is the most irresponsible act of journalism I have ever seen in Cincinnati. The article should have been titled "Stop Lying to Yourself". The article tells of James Duane's lecture topic of Eddie Joe Lloyd, who was arrested for murder but doesn't say who testified against him. This was probably due to a witness's false testimony – as many cases do.

I was locked up due to false testimony by a crazy girlfriend. I have been unraveling her lies for years because the prosecutor's office failed to examine her "evidence" in the form of a forged e-mail they didn't even bother to verify. But even though she could also be seen as a "snitch" what she really was is a liar.

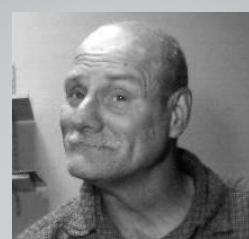
Also, to further illustrate the real problem, I bring to your attention the Noelle Washington case in Over-the-Rhine. Her accused killer, Mark Pickens allegedly raped her the day before he killed her and killed two babies. This tragedy could have been stopped if her ex-boyfriend cooperated with the police after he was allegedly shot and nearly killed by Pickens. In other words, if he had "snitched" a 19-year-old woman, a 3-month-old baby, and a 9-year-old little girl would still be alive today. All it would have taken was man swallowing his pride going against popular opinion. That's a very small price to pay to save three innocent lives, isn't it?

This article seems like a written contract with drug dealers to allow them to kill people like Noelle Washington. That is irresponsible and unacceptable. Your decision to print this article greatly disappoints me and it dishonors people like Noelle. Are they cows to be killed and whose memory is disgraced by silent, fearful conspiracies?

Sorry to go out on a sad note but snitching and lying to a prosecutor's office, whose job is finding the truth, are two different issues. Remaining silent and enabling murderers to kill babies is immoral and borders on insane.

Paul Schmitt
Cincinnati

Cleo's Joke Corner



Lois Lane asked Superman to meet her at the ice-cream parlor. He asked why. She said, "Look, I am a reporter. I need a really good scoop."

Why didn't they play cards on Noah's Ark? Because he was standing on the deck.

Reader Survey

Dear Readers,

Over the last year, we have worked hard to improve the content, design and overall program of *Streetvibes*. We would greatly appreciate you taking the time to fill out this brief reader survey. We value your feedback and opinions.

Please return your survey to 117 E. 12th Street, Cincinnati, Ohio 45202. You may also e-mail your responses to streetvibeslayout@gmail.com.

If you have other information or comments please feel free to let us know when you return your survey.

Thank you,

Gregory Flannery

Gregory Flannery
Editor

— — — — —
| **Why do you buy Streetvibes?** |
| _____ |
| _____ |
| _____ |

| **Where do you buy Streetvibes?** |
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| **What do you like most about Streetvibes?** |
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| **What do you like least about Streetvibes?** |
| _____ |
| _____ |
| _____ |

| **What would you like to see in Streetvibes that isn't in the paper now?** |
| _____ |
| _____ |
| _____ |

| Gender: (circle) | Age: (circle) | Income: (circle) |
|-------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Male | Under 18 | 40 - 49 |
| Female | 19 - 29 | 50 - 59 |
| | 30 - 39 | 60 + |
| | | Less than \$10,000 |
| | | \$10,000 - \$14,999 |
| | | \$15,000 - \$24,999 |
| | | \$25,000 - \$34,999 |
| | | \$35,000 - \$49,999 |
| | | \$50,000 - \$69,999 |
| | | \$70,000 and above |

| Race: (circle all that apply) | |
|---|------------------|
| African American/ Black | Pacific Islander |
| Asian | White |
| Hispanic | Other: |

| **Don't forget to send us your survey.** |

| 117 E. 12th Street, Cincinnati, Ohio 45202 |
| or streetvibeslayout@gmail.com |

Need Help or Want to Help?

Shelter: Women and Children

| | |
|--|----------|
| Central Access Point | 381-SAFE |
| Cincinnati Union Bethel | 768-6907 |
| 300 Lytle Street, Cinti, Ohio 45202 | |
| Bethany House | 557-2873 |
| 1841 Fairmount Ave, Cinti, Ohio 45214 | |
| Grace Place Catholic Worker House | 681-2365 |
| 6037 Cary Ave, Cinti, Ohio 45224 | |
| Salvation Army | 762-5660 |
| 131 E. 12th Street, Cinti, Ohio 45202 | |
| YWCA Battered Women's Shelter | 872-9259 |

Churches Active in Northside

4230 Hamilton Ave, Cinti, Ohio 45223

| | |
|--|----------|
| FreeStore/FoodBank | 241-1064 |
| 112 E. Liberty Street, Cinti, Ohio 45202 | |
| Madisonville Ed & Assistance Center | 271-5501 |
| 3600 Erie Ave, Cinti, Ohio 45227 | |
| St. Vincent de Paul | 562-8841 |
| 1125 Bank Street, Cinti, Ohio 45214 | |

Treatment: Men

| | |
|-------------------------------------|----------|
| Charlie's 3/4 House | 784-1853 |
| 2121 Vine Street, Cinti, Ohio 45202 | |

| | |
|----------------------------|----------|
| DIC Live In Program | 721-0643 |
| Prospect House | 921-1613 |

Starting Over

| | |
|----------------------|----------|
| Starting Over | 961-2256 |
|----------------------|----------|

Treatment: Women

| | |
|--------------------------------|----------|
| First Step Home | 961-4663 |
| 2203 Fulton, Cinti, Ohio 45206 | |

Treatment: Both

| | |
|-------------------|----------|
| AA Hotline | 351-0422 |
| CCAT | 381-6672 |

| | |
|--|--|
| 830 Ezzard Charles Dr. Cinti, Ohio 45214 | |
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| | |
|---|----------|
| Joseph House (Veterans) | 241-2965 |
| 1522 Republic Street, Cinti, Ohio 45202 | |

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----------|
| Hamilton County ADAS Board | 946-4888 |
| Recovery Health Access Center | 281-7422 |

| | |
|----------------------|----------|
| Sober Living | 681-0324 |
| Talbert House | 641-4300 |

Treatment: Both

| | |
|-------------------|----------|
| AA Hotline | 351-0422 |
| CCAT | 381-6672 |

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| 830 Ezzard Charles Dr. Cinti, Ohio 45214 | |
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|---|----------|
| Joseph House (Veterans) | 241-2965 |
| 1522 Republic Street, Cinti, Ohio 45202 | |

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|--------------------------------------|----------|
| Hamilton County ADAS Board | 946-4888 |
| Recovery Health Access Center | 281-7422 |

| | |
|----------------------|----------|
| Sober Living | 681-0324 |
| Talbert House | 641-4300 |

Advocacy

| | |
|--------------------------------|----------|
| Catholic Social Action | 421-3131 |
| Community Action Agency | 569-1840 |

| | |
|-------------------------------------|----------|
| Contact Center | 381-4242 |
| 1227 Vine Street, Cinti, Ohio 45202 | |

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|---|----------|
| Franciscan JPIC | 721-4700 |
| Gr. Cinti Coalition for the Homeless | 421-7803 |

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| 117 E. 12th Street, Cinti, Ohio 45202 | |
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|---|----------|
| Intercommunity Justice & Peace Cr. | 579-8547 |
| Legal Aid Society | 241-9400 |

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|---|----------|
| Ohio Justice & Policy Center | 421-1108 |
| Faces Without Places | 363-3300 |

| | |
|------------------|----------|
| Stop AIDS | 421-2437 |
|------------------|----------|

Health

| | |
|--|----------|
| Center for Respite Care | 621-1868 |
| 3550 Washington Ave, Cinti, Ohio 45229 | |

Crossroad Health Center

5 E. Liberty St. Cinti, Ohio 45202

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----------|
| Health Resource Center | 357-4602 |
| Homeless Mobile Health Van | 352-2902 |

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----------|
| McMicken Dental Clinic | 352-6363 |
| 40 E. McMicken Ave, Cinti, Ohio 45202 | |

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|-------------------------------------|----------|
| Mental Health Access Point | 558-8888 |
| Mercy Franciscan at St. John | 981-5800 |

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| 1800 Logan St. Cinti, Ohio 45202 | |
|----------------------------------|--|

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|--------------------------------|----------|
| NAMI of Hamilton County | 458-6670 |
| PATH Outreach | 977-4489 |

Other Resources

| | |
|--|----------|
| Center Independent Living Options | 241-2600 |
| Emmanuel Community Center | 241-2563 |

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| 1308 Race St. Cinti, Ohio 45202 | |
|---------------------------------|--|

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|------------------------------------|----------|
| Peaslee Neighborhood Center | 621-5514 |
| 214 E. 14th St. Cinti, Ohio 45202 | |

Collaborating, Creating, Changing

Jan Brown Checco's art is about spirit and community

Until her mother's death in 1987, Jan Brown Checco, a successful 2D artist, illustrator and graphic designer, used her art primarily as a commodity, mainly for commercial purposes; this is what her conservative parents expected her to do in order to earn a living.

"When my mother died, I suddenly realized that my biological clock was ticking and that I needed to start expressing myself, to make a statement through my visual art" she says. "It was as if I gave myself permission to move in a different, more personal direction without having to justify why. My mother had a tragic death from terminal cancer; to survive my own despair, I began grieving through my art."

Brown Checco could only express her unspeakable pain in images. At the same time she was raising two daughters and pushing against prevailing anti-feminist ideas in the *Bible*. Her art became increasingly focused on her family, parenting, womanhood and indirectly herself. It was cathartic and therapeutic and helped her move on.

"If you're so formally removed from the art you're making that it is not helping you, lifting you up, resolving something you cannot understand, then it is a pity," she says. "For me, this is a fundamental function of art."

In 1987 Brown Checco came across Joseph Campbell's views of how philosophy, religion, art history and cultures are interwoven. It led her to a different appreciation of spirituality and discovery of the Tao and Buddhism, which started manifesting itself in her art.

Brown Checco has been making art as long as she can recall, finger painting at age 4 at her grandmother's kitchen table. An art career was a natural path for her. She attended Miami University, then the Art Academy of Cincinnati for her bachelor's degree in fine arts; and the University of Cincinnati College of Design, Architecture, Art and Planning for her master's degree. She is a

painter and a sculptor versatile in many media and techniques. Over the past 15 years Checco has been using her design and management skills to create community-based art projects and cultural exchanges. Her aim is to strengthen artists' collaborative abilities, give voice to individuals who otherwise are not heard, educate, inspire and facilitate communication.

In 1993 she founded "Art in the Square," a visual arts festival aimed at bringing the region's talents of out of their studios to connect with the public. In 2005 she created the "Vine Street Murals and Can-paign" in Over the Rhine, a five-month project employing local children. These were the first public murals to appear downtown, accompanied by 30 colorful trash cans.

In 1999 Brown Checco started facilitating artistic and cultural exchanges between Cincinnati and its Sister Cities, arranging for Cincinnati artists to present their work in Munich and for Munich artists to come to Cincinnati. In 2002 she invited master ceramic artists from each sister city to come to Cincinnati to create art for



Jan Brown Checco is both an artist and arts organizer. Photo by Bill Howes.

the pavilion in Theodore M. Berry International Friendship Park. In 2004 she organized an exchange including nine artists from Cincinnati and nine from Munich. The artists created drawings that were reproduced and given to participating artists from the other city. They were allowed to do whatever they wanted to the drawings to create their own new works.

The same formula was repeated in 2007, including artists from Cincinnati, Munich and Liuzhou, China. The hundreds of original drawings and resulting redraws were exhibited in each of the sister cities. The project received an award from Sister Cities International for Innovation in the Arts and Culture.

Brown Checco has been the lead designer for three Butterfly Shows at Krohn Conservatory, interpreting the cultures of China, India and next year, Japan. She is also art administrator for "The Black Brigade Monument," the first piece of sculpture in the new Cincinnati Riverfront Park, scheduled for dedication in 2011. The monument will tell the story of the company of black volunteers who, during the Civil War, organized to defend Cincinnati from Confederate attack.

She is also organizing the production of 145 pieces of art for a new building for special-need patients at Children's Hospital Medical Center. Many of the works will be by patients and volunteers.

Brown Checco's art reflects her social and political views, her philosophy of life and her spiritual connectedness to nature and to her family.

"For me, activism is about the essence of reality as pure activity, especially spiritual activity," she says. "I practice it when I work in the garden, when I play with my grandchild, and also when I do my own visual art or am engaged in visual art projects with different people and demands. All end up being connected; it is seamless to me."

Thanks to visiting Chinese teachers she has hosted, Brown Checco learned about Taoism and Confucianism. Her ceramic piece, *Balance*, is a reflection on the Confucian Li (Code of Ethics), the equivalent of our 10 Commandments. The code consists of eight principles which, if practiced, are thought to lead to balance and harmony. The artwork includes two small ceramic figures, one representing "Excess," bending under a burden, and the other "Lack," looking at symbolic empty hands instead of at the things one has. Its message pertains to compulsive consumerism and greed and the need for a simpler, grateful and reflective life.

"Finding your authentic self, playing your role in community and being helpful, having a righteous motive, being responsible and responsive – these are the things that should matter," Brown Checco says. "They do matter to me, and that's how I try to live my life and what I consider in my art."

Artists as Activists is a regular column highlighting Greater Cincinnati artists who use art as a vehicle for change. Saad Ghosn is the founder of SOS Art.



'Balance,' a ceramic work, is inspired by the Confucian Li. Photo by Saad Ghosn.